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EXAMINER

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Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

DETAILED ACTION

Response to Arguments

1. Applicant's arguments filed 1/14/08 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

(a) Applicant argues "Applicants submit that it is clear that the user..." on page 7, 3rd paragraph of the Remarks filed 1/14/08.

The Examiner reads the remote user as the television distribution system operator. In essence, the remote user is the television distribution system operator since the remote user controls what the subscriber watches. The remote user is capable of enabling and disabling distribution of programming at the household (Ellis [0018]).

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 102

2. The following is a quotation of the appropriate paragraphs of 35 U.S.C. 102 that form the basis for the rejections under this section made in this Office action:

A person shall be entitled to a patent unless –

(e) the invention was described in (1) an application for patent, published under section 122(b), by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent or (2) a patent granted on an application for patent by another filed in the United States before the invention by the applicant for patent, except that an international application filed under the treaty defined in section 351(a) shall have the effects for purposes of this subsection of an application filed in the United States only if the international application designated the United States and was published under Article 21(2) of such treaty in the English language.

3. Claims 1-5, 7-13, and 16-20, are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(e) as being anticipated by Ellis (US 2005/0028208).

As for claim 1, Ellis teaches a method for monitoring operation of a television distribution system comprising provider equipment and subscriber equipment, said method comprising:

receiving, at a control unit (remote program access device 24 – fig. 5), a directive (command) for a television distribution system operator (remote user) to use a particular terminal (24) under control of the system operator and remote from the subscriber equipment (22 - fig. 2a) to monitor a particular channel (channel tuned to by remote user) within a plurality of channels transmitted from a head-end (12) of the provider equipment to the subscriber equipment through a distribution node (20) of the television distribution system, wherein the directive is received at the control unit through a communication means of the television distribution system (Referring to fig. 2b, programming is received over link 20, and the directive is inputted into remote program access device 24 by the user – [0072]. A remote user through remote program access device can remotely monitor what channel the television at the subscriber end is tuned to. The remote user inputs the directive to monitor what the other user at home is viewing. - [0136] – [0137]. The Examiner reads the remote user as the television distribution system operator. In essence, the remote user is the television distribution system operator since the remote user controls what the subscriber watches. The remote user is capable of enabling and disabling distribution of programming at the household (Ellis [0018]));

sending a command indicative of the particular channel to the particular terminal to be monitored – [0136].

receiving content being transmitted on the particular channel at the particular terminal through the distribution node of the television distribution system – (Content regarding information of the programming current being viewed by the subscriber is transmitted to remote program access device 24. The content includes the channel tuned to, rating of program, etc. [0136]-[0137]);

capturing the received content and reporting the captured content – [0136]-[0137];

As for claim 2, Ellis teaches the reported contents are used to verify delivery of contents from the television distribution system – (Observations of the received monitoring system provide verification of the content delivery at the display site – [0136]- [0137]).

As for claim 3, Ellis teaches the reported contents are used to verify operation of a user interface at the particular terminal – (The monitoring method takes into account verifying of a “user interface mechanism” –[0135]-[0137]).

As for claims 4 and 18, Ellis teaches wherein the received contents are captured as one or more video frames- [0135].

As for claims 5 and 19, Ellis teaches wherein the received contents are captured as a video sequence – [0135].

As for claim 7, Ellis teaches wherein the directive is received as a part of a regular monitoring schedule – [0157], [0071].

As for claim 8, Ellis teaches the command is sent to a remote control unit – [0092].

As for claim 9, Ellis teaches wherein the particular terminal is selected from among a plurality of terminals comprising at least one model operable to mimic a terminal in the subscriber equipment (Remote program guide access device 24 can be selected from among an array of computing devices, including that device which is at the subscriber terminal – [0092]. Device 24 displays status information about the subscriber terminal. Thus, the limitation “mimic a subscriber terminal” is met- [0136]).

Claim 10 contains the limitations of claim 1 and is analyzed as previously discussed with respect to that claim.

As for claim 11, Ellis teaches a monitor and control unit operatively coupled to the control unit and configured to provide the directive to monitor the particular channel at the selected terminal – [0092], [0136].

As for claim 12, Ellis teaches the monitor and control unit is further configured to provide a set of directives to test user interaction at the selected terminal (The remote program access device 24 sends monitoring instructions for monitoring whether the interactive television program guide is in use. As a result, user interaction with the user interface mechanism is tested. – [0136]).

As for claim 13, Ellis teaches the monitor and control unit is further configured to provide a set of directives to verify proper delivery of contents on a plurality of channels to a plurality of terminals (The remote program access device 24 provides monitoring instructions to the user terminal. The monitoring instructions meet the claimed "set of directives" and the observations of the received monitoring information provide verification of the content delivery at the display site [0136]. There are multiple display sites on the network – fig. 30a).

As for claim 16, Ellis teaches a plurality of terminals (television equipment 244 – fig. 27) of a plurality of terminal models deployable in the subscriber equipment – (The more recently the terminal has been deployed, the more likely it is that it will be of a newer model. For example, a user who subscribed to cable tv in 1996, is likely to have an older model STB than a user who subscribed to cable tv in 2006. - [0185]).

As for claim 17, Ellis teaches the control system includes a media capture unit configured to capture the contents received from the selected terminal (The review of the monitoring information produced by the monitoring instructions after the information is received at the remote programming guide access device which enable conclusions regarding the observer's observation of the content to be deduced ([0136]-[0137])). The reception of the monitoring information inherently teaches some sort of "capture" unit for capturing the content.).

Claim 20 contains the limitations of claims 1 and 10 and is analyzed as previously discussed with respect to that claim.

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

4. The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all

obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

5. Claim 6 is rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ellis in view of Simsic (6269484).

As for claim 6, Ellis fails to disclose wherein the captured contents are reported as a bitmap.

In an analogous art, Simsic teaches wherein the content transmitted is in bitmap format – col. 4, lines 8-13.

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to modify Ellis' invention to include wherein the content transmitted is in "bitmap" format instead of the "one or more frames", as taught by Simsic, in order to gain additional valuable data about the operation of the apparatus through querying and monitoring.

6. Claims 14 and 15 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Ellis in view of Blumenau.

As for claim 14, Ellis fails to teach the command directs the selected terminal to tune to the particular channel.

In an analogous art, Blumeanu teaches the command directs the selected terminal to tune to the particular channel (Referring to fig. 3c, Blumenau teaches the subscriber terminal that is used for transmitting monitoring information must be tuned to a channel in order to transmit the monitoring information to content provider 301. The content being viewed is transmitted to the content provider 301. As a result, the selected terminal (301) is tuned to the channel. – col. 11, lines 1-13).

It would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time of applicant's invention to modify Ellis' invention to include the above mentioned limitation,

as taught by Blumenau, in order to enable conclusions regarding the observer's observation of the content to be deduced.

Claim 15 contain the limitations of claim 14 and is analyzed as previously discussed with respect to that claim. Claim 15 additionally calls for the following which Ellis teaches:

A remote control unit configured to receive a command for monitoring (display remote, touch-screen remote – [0092]).

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to Sumaiya A. Chowdhury whose telephone number is (571) 272-8567. The examiner can normally be reached on Mon-Fri, 9-5:00.

If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, John Miller can be reached on (571) 272-7353. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR. Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only. For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/John W. Miller/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 2623

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